



# Outcome Assessment of the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program

## Executive Summary

June 2005

The Office of Policy and Evaluation of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State contracted with SRI International to conduct a series of assessments of outcomes and impacts of various specialized exchange programs under the overall umbrella of the Fulbright Educational Exchange Program, the U.S. government's flagship international educational program.

The objective of the Outcome Assessment of the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program is to document the contribution of the "Fulbright experience" to the professional and personal lives of Program alumni and to demonstrate—in quantitative and qualitative terms—the Program's effectiveness in achieving its legislative goal of fostering mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

### Overall Assessment

*"The Fulbright experience is a great experience. I feel very proud of it. I wish the events that are occurring lately on the international scene will not effect the relationships between the American and Moroccan peoples, and that the differences and diversity in culture and religion can be regarded as enriching to both of them."*  
(Moroccan Fulbright Scholar)

*"I personally think the Fulbright program is even more needed today than ever to provide educators and scholars with opportunities for developing an unbiased and differentiated approach to the history and culture of the US from firsthand experience."*  
(German Fulbright Scholar)

The Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program is resoundingly meeting its legislative mandate of increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Visiting Scholars who participated in the Program between 1980 and 2001 give ringing endorsements to the Program. The Fulbright experience is a life-changing one; above and beyond the professional development opportunities the Program affords, the impact is evident in the cultural learning, understanding, and appreciation of American values and institutions the Scholars report, in subsequent changes in how they conduct their personal and professional lives, in the development of lasting international ties and relationships, and in the institutional changes they introduce once they return home that they specifically attribute to participation in the Program.

The effects the Visiting Fulbright Scholars experience reach far beyond the individual Scholars themselves. The Program also has powerful and diverse impacts on the scholars' families, colleagues at home and host institutions, students, and friends. It is just this multiplier effect that makes the Program such a powerful and important tool of public diplomacy.

## **Program Description**

The Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program provides grants and support to overseas scholars to conduct research, lecture, or pursue combined research and lecturing in the United States. The predominant share of grants to Visiting Scholars, about 85%, is for conducting research rather than for lecturing or combined lecturing/research. The Fulbright experience is intended to benefit the Scholar and the home institution, as well as the host U.S. institution. In order to share information and build mutual understanding, Visiting Fulbright Scholars are often expected to speak to academic and community groups about their home countries' history and culture and about their research.

Awards are made through a merit-based, open competition. Scholars apply for a grant in their home country, either through bi-national Fulbright commissions and foundations that exist in 51 countries or through U.S. Embassies. More than 40,000 Visiting Fulbright Scholars have conducted research or taught in the United States since the establishment of the Program in 1946. Approximately 800 grants are awarded to Visiting Scholars each year.

The Program is administered in the United States by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), a private organization that facilitates international exchange in higher education, assists in the administration of the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program under a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

## **Program Goal**

The principal legislative goal of the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has operationalized this broad goal is through four distinct indicators:

- **Satisfaction:** Overall satisfaction with grant conditions and with opportunities to study, conduct research, and develop interactions with a diverse set of American colleagues and friends.
- **Educational/professional and cultural learning:** Personal and professional interactions and activities at the host institution;

participation in social, community, and enrichment activities; and learning about the U.S. culture and society.

- **Effects on behavior:** Personal and professional enhancement/attainment; professional contributions (products, resources, knowledge) to home or host institution; and using and sharing new knowledge/skills.
- **Linkages, ties, and institutional changes:** Development and maintenance of personal, professional, and institutional linkages and ties; and participation in activities designed to foster international cooperation and/or educational exchange.

## Evaluation Methodology

More than 100 countries around the world are represented in the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program. From these, 16 countries were selected by the Department of State for inclusion in the study, based upon geographic representation, political salience, longevity of the Program, and type of program administration (Commission versus non-Commission): Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Brazil, Germany, Ghana, India, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine. The assessment was further limited to Scholars who were awarded grants between 1980 and 2001.

The SRI assessment team held a series of initial interviews with Fulbright Program sponsors in the United States from the Office of Academic Exchange Programs in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and with key representatives from CIES in an attempt to understand the complexities of the Visiting Scholar Program. These interviews with program administrators in the United States were followed by a series of in-depth interviews with program administrators, focus groups and individual interviews with alumni in nine of the 16 study countries. These perspectives were used to inform the design of a single questionnaire for Visiting Scholar alumni from all countries. Concurrent with site visit interviews and focus groups, an extensive search effort was undertaken to locate valid current e-mail or postal addresses for 4,876 alumni listed in the grantee records maintained by CIES who hailed from the countries in the sample and who had participated in the 1980-2001 timeframe. Data were collected between April and August 2003. Ultimately, SRI obtained potentially valid e-mail or postal addresses for 3,324 of these alumni. By the time the survey was closed out, 1,894 valid completed questionnaires had been received, or a 57% response rate.

The findings of this assessment are based primarily on the quantitative results of the survey, but they are supplemented by qualitative information obtained in open-ended questions in the survey as well as through individual interviews and focus groups.

## Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program Outcome Assessment

Country	Population	Sample	Responses	Response Rate
Argentina	165	104	80	77%
Brazil	416	333	157	47%
Bulgaria	150	114	55	48%
Germany	540	308	176	57%
Ghana	111	81	25	31%
India	629	465	203	44%
Israel	343	211	151	72%
Japan	686	543	324	60%
Jordan	156	66	45	68%
Korea	261	203	101	50%
Morocco	193	155	94	61%
Netherlands	344	232	174	75%
Nigeria	235	16	11	69%
Poland	410	333	187	56%
Sri Lanka	80	63	31	49%
Ukraine	157	97	73	75%
Unidentified			7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4876</b>	<b>3324</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>57%</b>

### Study Findings

There is no question that the Fulbright Scholar experience is a positive one for the participants, that they are able to make profound professional advances during their grant year and afterwards, and that these developments have widespread impacts on the Scholars' students, colleagues, host institutions, countries, and the state of international scholarship. Perhaps the most important thing is the remarkable strength and longevity of the friendships and professional relationships that are formed during the grant.

#### **Satisfaction**

- The Scholars were overwhelming satisfied with the professional opportunities afforded by their grants.
  - 96% felt that their host institution was a good match with their needs and interests;
  - 98% were satisfied with the opportunities they had to do research;
  - 93% reported positively about the opportunities for collaboration as part of the grant.
- The Scholars felt welcomed and accepted by the students and faculty at their host institutions (95%) and felt that they received sufficient professional support from faculty and staff at their host institutions (93%).

*I was very satisfied during my stay at the United States, I was welcomed in my host institution, the people I met were very nice, generous, hospitable and collaborative. The goal of the Fulbright program, “mutual understanding” between the people of the United States and the people of other countries, is noble, amazing. (Jordanian Fulbright Scholar)*

*My trip to the United States through the Fulbright Program has been one of the greatest experiences in my life. (Argentinean Fulbright Scholar)*

### **Educational/ Professional and Cultural Learning**

Scholars participated in many diverse types of learning activities during their grants.

- On a professional level, grantees conducted research on their own (79%) or with others (64%); participated in conferences and seminars (75%); carried out library/archival/ laboratory research (70%); wrote articles, papers, or books (70%); and worked with U.S. students and faculty on a variety of collaborative projects and committees.
- On a more personal level, Scholars visited Americans in their homes (90%), watched/listened to local media (90%), participated in cultural events (80%), and gave lessons and talks about their home countries’ culture and society (49%).
- Almost all Scholars reported having gained new knowledge about the American culture (99%), educational system (98%), political system (96%), or economy (94%). Almost all (99%) agreed at least somewhat that their experiences gave them a deeper understanding of the United States in general.

*I experienced for myself how helpful and open-hearted Americans are. I also understood how much time and effort many Americans spend on community life and different kinds of charity. All this broke a stereotype I had had about Americans’ individualism.... (Ukrainian Fulbright Scholar)*

*Teaching at an American University made me fundamentally rethink the cultural/ideological blue-prints that had up to then determined my views of American culture, academic life, politics etc. But my 'external' perspective also proved to be a great stimulus for my American students as it forced them to reposition themselves and understand that there are differing views that might be worthwhile considering. (German Fulbright Scholar)*

### **Effects on Behavior**

- Participation in the Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program had very positive effects on Scholars' professional lives, contributing to greater insight into their fields (99%), their subsequent professional publications and works (98%), and enhanced professional credentials (98%).
- Almost all Scholars reported having changed their professional activities in some way as a result of the grant. For example, they used knowledge and skills learned during their Fulbright experiences in their courses (82%), broadened the international aspects of their teaching and research in general (64%), and became more of a resource for their colleagues with regard to knowledge and skills learned (64%).
- Scholars reported a variety of concrete ways in which these changes in their personal, professional, and institutional behaviors and attitudes have had direct benefits on both their host institution while in the United States as well as their home institution after completing their grants.

*The Fulbright program enabled me to conduct research in the area of entrepreneurship which is of great importance to my home country's economy. (Nigerian Fulbright Scholar)*

*I created a rural leadership program in Brazil similar to the ones I visited in the US. (Brazilian Fulbright Scholar)*

*I organized scholarly workshops which proved that future academic cooperation with my country's institutions can be as valuable for U.S. institutions as it is for us. (Polish Fulbright Scholar)*

*I think that my interactions with very prestigious researchers as well as learning a state of the art technique that I am now applying routinely in my laboratory have been key players in my home institution's development. (Argentinean Fulbright Scholar)*

*The Fulbright grant played a crucial role in giving me professional self-confidence. I am now editor-in-chief of an international journal. (Moroccan Fulbright Scholar)*

### **Linkages, Ties, and Institutional Change**

One of the most important outcomes of the Program is the lasting relationships and linkages that are forged during the experience.

- Almost all Visiting Scholars (95%) reported having had continuing contact with people they met in the United States during their grants, and remarkably, almost all have continued to collaborate with colleagues from the United States, with more than a third describing this continuing collaboration as significant in scale.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impressively, six out of ten Scholars have been visited in their home country by individuals they met in the United States, and a nearly equal percentage has revisited the United States.</li> <li>• In addition to the high percentages of Visiting Fulbright Scholars who have had continued contact with individuals from the United States, the numbers of individuals with whom they have had continuing contact are also impressive; 42% of Scholars reported having continuing contact with five or more U.S. colleagues since completing their grants.</li> <li>• As another effect of the grant, many Scholars (66%) reported having become much more involved in activities that foster international cooperation since their Fulbright experiences.</li> </ul>
<p><i>My experience allowed me to organize and train several teams of student-researchers who have, over the past decade, entered into what used to be a fledgling U.S. Studies field. It also fostered the acquisition of bibliography and research material, and allowed improved face-to-face contacts whereby U.S. colleagues considered the possibility and usefulness of coming to Argentina and sharing the insights and expertise. (Argentinean Fulbright Scholar)</i></p> <p><i>I made quite a few American friends during my stay as a Fulbright grantee and some of the friendships still last nearly 20 years later...these personal relationships are the ultimate basis for mutual understanding and peace between the countries and peoples of the world. The (Fulbright) Program's biggest contribution has been that it has created a great number of friends to America and Americans throughout the world. (Japanese Fulbright Scholar)</i></p> <p><i>My Fulbright experience was a tentative exploration of the world beyond the frontiers I was familiar with at that point of time. Since then I have, with greater confidence, interacted with academics in US colleges and universities and have also been engaged in the exchange of scholarship by setting up an international network of like-minded scholars in pursuit of common goals (MELUS, India Chapter). In addition, I have made frequent trips to the US to lecture on different aspects of Indian literature and culture. This helps to bridge the distance between the two countries, awakening them to the fact that no man is an alien and no country strange. (Indian Fulbright Scholar)</i></p>	

## Conclusions

*“The Fulbright Program is one of the most valuable programs of its kind that I am aware of. I hope it continues – forever!”* (German Fulbright Scholar)

The Visiting Fulbright Scholar Program plays a vital role for the United States and for its partner countries. The professional and personal experiences of grantees and their families broaden and deepen mutual understanding and create a global community of friends and colleagues that ultimately serve in the interests of world peace.

Professional learning is advanced by the activities of Scholars both during and after their grants. Personal and professional behaviors and goals are changed. Important and lasting relationships and linkages between individuals and institutions are established. All of these results are multiplied by the participation of the Scholars' families in the experience.

As with the U.S. Scholar component of the Fulbright Program, the Visiting Scholar Program has received an extremely high level of endorsement from its participants. They believe, as do their U.S. counterparts, that the Program reaches far beyond the individual grantees themselves. It greatly benefits their colleagues at home and in the United States, their students, their home and host institutions, their families, and their friends, not only during the time of the grant but for many years thereafter. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this assessment provide many powerful examples of the ways in which the Fulbright Program promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries, thereby increasing U.S. engagement with the world.

### **Prepared for:**

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